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Review of *Welfare, Work, and Poverty: Social Assistance in China*. Qin Gao. Reviewed by Jing Guo.

Jing Guo
University of Hawaii at Manoa

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the potential policy change which could assist children's transition to adulthood. The major audience for this book would be policy researchers, social work practitioners, or graduate students who are interested in foster care or child welfare in China. Also, this book is a great resource for policymakers in China who make child welfare policies and allocate resources for the children in foster care.

Mingyang Zheng
University of Minnesota

Qin Gao, *Welfare, Work, and Poverty: Social Assistance in China*.
Oxford University Press (2017), 176 pages, \$35 (hardcover).

This book provides the first comprehensive evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of China's primary social assistance program, Minimum Livelihood Guarantee, or Dibao. The work examines its background, development, and impact on poverty, welfare and work. The most appealing feature of the book is its systematic evaluation of the Dibao program since its inception in 1993. As the author argues, Dibao has been introduced and implemented for 20 years. That is time enough to review and evaluate the program's short-term and long-term impact and look for directions for future development.

The coverage of the book is comprehensive, including nine chapters. It is helpful that the author gives a preview of scope of the book and the main findings in the first chapter. Subsequent beginning chapters trace the background, inception, and development of Dibao, and describe the patterns in Dibao thresholds, financing, beneficiaries, and its decentralized implementation. Chapters 4 through 8 focus on evaluation of Dibao's impact on various outcomes and its effectiveness, such as targeting performance, anti-poverty effectiveness, welfare-to-work initiatives, family expenditures, social participation as well as subjective well-being. A final chapter discusses policy solutions and research direction for the future.

The style of writing is clear, precise and straightforward. In each section, the author clearly states main research questions and organizes the chapters accordingly, which is a helpful feature for readers. For readers who have particular interests in certain topics,

such as the history, or the effects of Dibao, the division of chapters makes it easy to identify the respective content.

This book makes a special contribution to the literature in China's study and comparative welfare state study. The author takes advantage of all sorts of available literature (both in English and Chinese), various types of data (such as administrative data, large scale survey data, and policy documents), and uses mixed methods to analyze and synthesize the evidence. The findings presented in the book reflect the author's rigorous scholarly work and solid knowledge of China's experience. For instance, the author points out the dual functions of Dibao, not only providing a basic safety net for the poor, but also maintaining social and political stability in China. Existing literature on Dibao in Chinese often focuses on local experience descriptions, while lacking theoretical insights and research rigor. Meanwhile, for the world's largest welfare program, limited literature on Dibao in English makes it hard to share China's experience and contribute to growing comparative welfare state research globally. This book fills the gap in the literature.

Furthermore, this book provides new empirical evidence and evaluates policy performance from new perspectives. It not only evaluates its economic impacts on targeting, poverty reduction, and welfare-to-work efforts, which are the primary goals of social assistance programs, but also considers its socio-psychological impacts on social participation and subjective well-being, which are newly developed, yet understudied aspects. For example, in Chapter 8, the author draws on the international literature on behavioral and subjective responses to welfare and analyzes empirical evidence on how receiving Dibao might be associated with time use, social participation, and subjective well-being.

With regard to methodology, the author uses large data sets, such as the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), and advanced statistic methods, such as propensity score matching (PSM), to best utilize limited empirical evidence and sheds lights on the complexity of welfare programs, which have important implications for Dibao's future design and implementation.

This book is very informative and insightful for general readers who are interested in understanding contemporary China, as well as readers in academia, including political scientists, economists, sociologists, public policy researchers and social work scholars.

This book offers a good combination of storytelling and scholarly research. While general readers will benefit from the clear introduction, summary and discussion in each chapter, readers in academia will enjoy the professional tone with comprehensive empirical data and rigorous scientific methods.

The book discusses implications of findings on Dibao policy development in China, and it also presents suggestions for future research on Dibao policy evaluation and welfare study. While the book situates China's welfare program in the global comparative welfare state literature, it would be interesting to include more discussions of findings on Dibao in comparison with similar welfare programs in other countries. In current format, the author leaves it to readers to take relevant evidence for their own interpretations.

Jing Guo
University of Hawaii at Manoa